

California Organic Program Questions and Answers

Q. How do I become recognized as an Organic grower?

- A. All growers, producers and handlers of raw agricultural commodities (including eggs, seed, fiber and horticultural products) sold as organic, must be registered prior to the first sale of the commodity.

Q. How do I become registered?

- A. Contact the office of the Agricultural Commissioner in the county where the applicant's property is located for an application. For San Diego County the phone number is (858) 694-2778.

Q. What does the registration process require?

- A. The registrant must pay a registration fee and furnish the following information with their application:
1. Gross sales revenues (to determine fee).
 2. Nature of registrant's business.
 3. Map of farm or facility.
 4. List of all substances applied to farm for the past three years.
 5. Name of certifying organization (if any).
 6. Complete public information sheet including the registrant's name, address, and nature of business.

Q. When will the registrant receive approved registration and who will issue it?

- A. The registrant will receive their registration from the County's Agricultural Commissioner upon the commissioner's acceptance. The registration will be considered valid at that time.

Q. Must a producer or handler re-register each year, or "once registered, always registered?"

- A. The registration must be renewed each year. A renewal packet will be sent out from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Organic program, however it is the registrant's responsibility to make sure their registration does not expire whether they receive a renewal packet or not. If no longer selling organic products and the registrant does not want to remain registered, they must contact CDFA so they can be de-registered. Otherwise their renewal will be considered in default and late fees will be assessed.

Q. How does certification differ from registration?

- A. Certification is performed by a third party organization, approved for certification and subjects the registrant to more scrutiny than the registration process.

Q. What records must producers of raw agricultural commodities that are sold as organic maintain?

A. Producers shall keep accurate and specific records of the following:

1. All substances applied to the crop, soil, growing medium and growing area. All substances shall be identified by brand name, if any, and by source.
2. The quantity harvested from each field or management unit and the date of harvest.
3. The name, address and, if applicable, the registration numbers of all packers, handlers, processors, or retailers to whom the food is sold or transferred, and the date of the transaction.

Q. Where can I get a copy of the National Organic Program and California Organic Foods Act?

A. Individuals can obtain copies of the NOP regulations by contacting the NOP website:

www.ams.usda.gov/nop

California Organic Foods Act: www.cdfa.ca.gov

Additional resources:

University of California, Cooperative Extension
Vric.ucdavis.edu/veginfo/topics/selectnewsdtopic.organic.htm

County of San Diego Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures
Regulator assistance: www.sdcawm.org

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